



A national program to increase fruit and vegetable consumption

5 A DAY FOR BETTER HEALTH

Background

Since its inception in late 1991, the 5 A Day for Better Health program has proven to be one of the nation's most widely recognized health promotion programs. As the largest national public-private nutrition education program ever launched, the 5 A Day program's strength is the combined effort of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), a not-for-profit consumer education foundation.

The program seeks to increase the number of fruits and vegetables Americans eat each day to five or more servings by the year 2000. Along with this main goal, the program works to inform Americans that eating fruits and vegetables can improve their health and may reduce the risk of cancer. Another objective is to show easy ways to add more fruits and vegetables to one's daily eating pattern.

Results of the program's efforts have, so far, been encouraging. The percentage of Americans who know they should eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day has increased nearly fivefold—from 8 to 36 percent—since the 5 A Day for Better Health program began in 1991. Even better is the fact that during the first three years of the program, the average adult's daily consumption of fruits and vegetables has increased significantly. Data from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Continuing Surveys of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII), shows that from 1989 to 1991, adults ate an average of 3.9 daily servings of fruits and vegetables. In 1994 that number had increased to approximately 4.4 servings per day—only about a half a serving from the recommended minimum of five. As Americans continue to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption, NCI and PBH will continue in their efforts to encourage all Americans to build their intake to five to nine daily servings.

The 5 A Day audience targeted by the national media program is all adult Americans currently trying to eat more fruits and vegetables, but not yet eating the recommended minimum of five servings daily (i.e., generally eating two to three servings), or about 40 to 50 percent of the U.S. population. Through a broad spectrum of activities, the program builds awareness, encourages eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, and offers easy, practical ways to reach that goal.

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National Cancer Institute

NCI coordinates a national media campaign to communicate the 5 A Day message. The media campaign's strategy is to teach consumers how to add a variety of fruits and vegetables in easy and tasty ways into their lives. Materials and messages focus on actions that help consumers fit 5 A Day into their daily lifestyles.

At the local level, 55 state and U.S. territorial health agencies are licensed by NCI to establish and coordinate 5 A Day programs within their states and territories to reach consumers with the 5 A Day message. The national partnership is implemented at the community level through statewide coalitions involving both industry and state licensees. Coalition participants include state and county health agencies, Military, state departments of education, state departments of agriculture, cooperative extension, voluntary agencies, businesses, hospitals, and state dietetics associations. Currently, 81 percent of states have a state and/or local 5 A Day coalition.

NCI also has awarded nine four-year and 25 one-year grants to state health agencies, universities, and cancer centers to implement and evaluate the effect of 5 A Day activities in schools, workplaces and other community settings.

Produce for Better Health Foundation

PBH serves as the central coordinator for members of industry involved in spreading the 5 A Day message. NCI has granted PBH a license to work with NCI to use the 5 A Day program and materials and to sublicense industry participants. Industry licensees reach consumers with informational and motivational 5 A Day messages at the point of purchase, through printed ads and broadcast media, and through their own employees and communities. PBH membership embraces virtually all segments of the fruit and vegetable industry, including fresh, frozen, dried, canned, and juice. PBH has licensed approximately 1,000 industry participants, including 35,000 grocery retailers, foodservice operators, growers, shippers, packagers, merchandisers, commodity boards, trade associations, branded products and others to conduct 5 A Day efforts.

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